the Richmond Review

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New Housing Proposed for Alexandria Theatre

By Thomas K. Pendergast

New housing at the Alexandria Theatre is being considered by the property owner, but with conditions that do not satisfy District 1 Supervisor Connie Chan, who is trying to secure landmark status for the iconic Richmond District building.

In an April 18 letter responding to an information request by Chan, the attorneys for Yorke Lee, the owner of the real estate company Timespace Alexandria LLC, described a proposal for an eight-story building at the site, which would include 74 residential units, nearly 4,500 square feet of ground-floor commercial space and more than 4,700 square feet of common area outdoor space.

They further requested the abatement of a pending Notice of Enforcement (NOE) from the San Francisco Planning Department requiring restoration and preservation of some historic elements of the building.

"Currently, my client's design team is preparing a new development plan that converts the property to housing and maintains the most significant character defining features," the letter from Nick Colla, of the law firm Colla and Ray LLP, states. "These features include the primary building elevations, the blade sign, marquee, entry (including the terrazzo flooring), and lobby with various character defining elements (drinking fountain, reliefs, lighting fixtures, etc.). We understand that the chandelier and murals are important, and we are exploring, if possible, how best to incorporate these in the new plan. Our plan will include the repair and restoration of the marquee and blade sign."

They also estimate this would require a construction loan exceeding $65 million,

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'The Golden Gate Before the Bridge'

Ansel Easton Adams was born in 1902 in San Francisco's Fillmore District. In 1907, his family moved two miles west to a new home near the Sea Cliff neighborhood, just south of the Presidio Army Post. An exhibition of his work is currently at the de Young Museum. Story on page 5. ***Photo by Ansel Adams (American, 1902–1984) "The Golden Gate Before the Bridge," 1932. Gelatin silver print courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The Lane Collection, SC69746 © The Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust.***

Financing Plan for Firefighting Infrastructure Released

By Thomas K. Pendergast

A study on financing the expansion of the Emergency Firefighting Water System (EFWS) – a separate heavy-duty pipeline system designed to fight a devastating conflagration following a major earthquake – was recently released by city agencies.

The report was in response to a resolution passed by the Board of Supervisors last September which called for the Office of Resilience and Capital Planning (ORCP) to come up with a financing plan by Dec. 31, 2022, to expand the EFWS.

The EFWS, formerly known as the Auxiliary Water Supply System, was initially built after the 1906 earthquake because so many water mains and connections in the regular system were broken that there was almost no water pressure left to fight fires. A fire break was created along Van Ness Avenue and a U.S. Navy firefighting ship pumping seawater from off shore was able to stop the fires from going further west.

Completed in 1913, at the time most of San Francisco was built up in the northern and eastern parts of the City. After some additions in 1986, the furthest this system goes west is 12th Avenue in the

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Musical Helps Lafayette Bounce Back After COVID

By Clarisse Kim

The lights dimmed. A hush fell over the auditorium. Every person in the room knew this was a special night for Lafayette Elementary School. For the first time since the pandemic, the Lafayette Parent Teachers Association (PTA) hosted its annual spring musical.

The play's revival was a major comeback from distance learning; for the past few years, the play was canceled due to COVID-19 restrictions, which worried the members of the PTA.

"As different programs started to go away from the school, and there weren't any people who remembered what they were, those programs didn't come back," said Nicole King, a Lafayette parent and fifth-grade teacher at the school. "We've been lucky to have the play come back."

Lafayette's spring musical is entirely organized by the PTA. To keep the program going throughout multiple years, veteran crew members passed on production information to the new parents taking their place. However, the pandemic nearly prevented this transfer of knowledge from happening.

"The kids had never seen a real play, nor did their parents," King said. "Even the fifth graders who were starring in this year's musical – the last play they would have seen – they would have been really young."

However, Lafayette regained its musical footing the year after quarantine. The PTA was able to host a smaller music showcase featuring songs from "Aladdin," "Singing in the Rain" and "The Wizard of Oz." The production also saw a change in leadership during that year. At the end of the season, Barbara Lyon, who directed the musical for eight years, stepped down and passed on the role to Ben Bleiman.

"When we heard that Barbara was retiring, we didn't want the musical to go away," Bleiman said. "(Programs) died during COVID that will never come back. We knew we had to keep the musical alive."

Fifth grader Cecilia Bendezu plays the role of Matilda in Lafayette's spring musical. ***Photo courtesy the Lafayette Elementary School PTA.***

During her final year as director, Lyon worked closely with Bleiman to direct the small theatrical showcase.

"I've done a lot of theater directing, especially in college," Bleiman said. "Even so, I learned so much from Barba-

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Looking Back

Kinen Carvala

Rose Garden

If it was once a well-known fact that roses could not be grown in San Francisco, how is there a flourishing rose garden in Golden Gate Park?

People have been growing roses for thousands of years. The first modern hybrid rose that bloomed consistently all season instead of only blooming once was bred by Jean-Baptiste Andre Guillot in France in 1867, according to a Penn State publication.

Before the San Francisco Rose Society started in 1941, conventional wisdom in the early 20th century was that roses couldn't thrive in San Francisco's sandy soil with windy and foggy summers. Garden nursery employees dissuaded customers wanting to grow roses and suggested other plantings like evergreen shrubs for better outcomes. What was a rose enthusiast to do?

In 1941, there were rumors of a man in the Sunset District somehow managing to grow "roses the likes of which had never been seen hereabouts," according to an account from Alfred Stettler, an early president of the San Francisco Rose Society, in the "History of the San Francisco Rose Society."

A September 1941 announcement in the SF Examiner called for rose enthusiasts to meet in the SF Public Library to see if there was interest to form a local rose society. One of the speakers at the meeting was George McDonough, who had a rose garden at his Sunset District home which hosted the first meeting of the new San Francisco Rose Society on Dec. 7, 1941. In spite of that day's attack in Pearl Harbor, the 20 members and friends discussed rose pruning, fertilization, and fungus and insect control.

This 2020 view of the Rose Garden in Golden Gate Park is looking north toward the intersection of Fulton Street and Park Presidio Boulevard. *Photo by Michael Durand.*

The first known local rose show was held by the San Francisco Rose Society on April 26, 1942, in the Palace Hotel with roughly 2,000 attendees, including Angelo J. Rossi, mayor of San Francisco at the time. There were 14 different classes for competitors to submit roses (e.g., Class 3 required one light pink bloom, in contrast to Class 4's one medium pink bloom and Class 5's rose pink bloom. Any three pink roses could be submitted together in an arrangement for Class 13. Other classes were for blooms of red, yellow, blended color or no color restrictions).

An extension of Park Presidio Boulevard to the JFK Promenade (then-named Main Drive, recently JFK Drive) became the Rose Garden in 1961, according to the San Francisco County Transportation Authority.

The Jan. 8, 1961, dedication of the one-and-a-half-acre rose garden had 200 attendees, according to the SF Chronicle, including:

- Mrs. Nat (Helene) Schoen, president of the American Rose Society (ARS), resident of Vancouver, Washington.
- Martin J. Martin, ARS Northern California-Nevada District director, who presided at the ceremony.
- George Christopher, mayor of San Francisco, who planted the first rose with a gold-plated shovel.
- Tula Sarantitis Christopher, mayor's wife, who was presented with a rose bouquet.

Roy L. Hudson, assistant superintendent of parks, designed the garden, but was unable to attend the ceremony. The San Francisco Rose Society also had a rose garden committee, which helped with the layout of the several dozen rose beds, soil preparation, selections of rose varieties and the writing of letters to nurseries and rose growers requesting plant donations, according to the "History of the San Francisco Rose Society," which also quoted Merrill Butler: "I only hope that George McDonough … can know about this, because a rose garden in Golden Gate Park was his dream for many years."

Though the San Francisco Bay Area has some wild roses, like the five-petaled purple California Wild Rose (Rosa californica) and Baldhip Rose (Rosa gymnocarpa) according to the California Native Plant Society, the Rose Garden has a range of garden roses with different sizes, shapes and smells bred through cross pollination of other rose varieties. Roses in the garden include the Queen Elizabeth and the Eureka. The Eureka rose was an All-American Rose Selection from 2003 with a plant patent applied for it. All-America Rose Selections (AARS) was an association created by the American rose industry in 1939 to test rose varieties, according to founding member Jackson & Perkins Company. The Golden Gate Park Rose Garden served as a testbed for roses in a cool, moist climate, according to local station's KALW podcast about the park.

January rose pruning demonstrations used to be held in the Botanical Garden in Golden Gate Park before switching to the Rose Garden. To promote new growth and a succession of flowers throughout the growing season, pruning is important to remove dead or diseased stems, according to Oregon State University. Rose stems too close together can become damaged, spreading disease.

With financial support from the estate of Alfred Fuhrman, the garden was rededicated on July 8, 1984, to celebrate the garden's refurbishment with new trellises and lattice work fences to support climbing plants and new framework for the rose beds.

In 1986, the rose was designated as the United States's national floral emblem in a Congressional joint resolution and President Ronald Reagan's proclamation.

A plaque by the garden's southeast corner, next to the base of the tall park map on the north side of JFK Promenade has the inscription:

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for contributing to the public interest in rose growing through its efforts in maintaining an outstanding public rose garden.

According to the SF Recreation and Park Department's website, the garden can be reserved for weddings.

The Rose Garden can be reached from its north entrance at the southeast corner of Fulton and Park Presidio Boulevard or from its south entrance on JFK Promenade. Roses typically start to bloom in mid-May and continue to bloom throughout the summer.

Find an archive of Kinen Carvala's "Looking Back" columns at RichmondSunsetNews.com.

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May 14

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Stop the Reckless SF Municipal Transit Agency

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Supervisor Connie Chan

Feeding Our Community

As COVID emergency declarations end, state assistance programs to help residents weather the pandemic are beginning to sunset. The COVID pandemic widened income inequality across California, with the gap between high- and low-income families being one of the largest in the nation.

Low-wage workers have been slow to recover from the pandemic, as many industries – like our local shops and restaurants – were closed to customers for over a year or shuttered completely. With inflation rising, the cost of food is quickly outpacing the incomes of many working people.

That impact is certainly felt in San Francisco, where many are struggling to keep up with the cost of living increasing. Beginning last month, CalFresh benefits, the state's version of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), were reduced. The San Francisco Human Services Agency estimates that approximately 70,000 households relying on CalFresh benefits will lose a total of $11.5 million per month, with individuals losing between $95 and $517 per month. With benefits expiring, the need for food pantries, like the ones provided by the San Francisco-Marin Food Bank, will see a drastic increase from food insecure residents.

And now, with the significant increases in food cost and loss of CalFresh benefits, many of our community partners are facing the next wave of challenges to feed our communities. On top of this challenge, SF-Marin Food Bank's pop-up food pantries are also facing the threat of potential closure. The SF Recreation and Park Department claims the Food Bank's permit will expire at the end of May due to San Francisco's emergency order ending. They have yet to offer an alternative site or extend the permit. Over the past year, the Food Bank has faced difficulty in locating a new location to host its pop-up food pantry, and if closed, about 2,500 families who rely on their services will be turned away. In the Richmond District alone, more than 600 families per week will lose food supplements and go hungry.

I am so grateful to our neighborhood partners who help feed our food insecure neighbors, including the Richmond Neighborhood Center, Richmond YMCA, Golden Gate Senior Center, Self-Help for the Elderly and Russian American Community Services. However, while these nonprofits do outstanding work to provide meals and grocery delivery to those in need, they do not have the resources to meet the demand for the entire community. We are seeing about $40 million annually needed to bridge the loss of state benefits and to feed families citywide.

As the Board of Supervisors' Budget Committee chair, I am committed to fighting for food security during this budget process, and to make sure our seniors and families and most vulnerable are sheltered and fed. By the time this is published, I hope there is a resolution to continue SF-Marin's Food Bank service to residents on the west side.

Connie Chan represents District 1 on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. She can be reached at 415-554-7410 or chanstaff@sfgov.org. Find an archive of her columns online at RichmondSunsetNews.com.

Assembly

Assemblymember Phil Ting

JCYC Assembly Nonprofit of the Year

While serving as your assemblymember in Sacramento, I have been a strong advocate for students from early childhood education through college. Whether it's digging California up from the bottom in per-pupil spending, creating Universal Transitional Kindergarten or providing free school lunches, my goal is to ensure our youth are provided opportunities and resources to succeed.

But the state cannot do it alone. We need community partners to help carry out this mission. The Japanese Community Youth Council (JCYC) has been one of those partners, serving thousands of local young people every year since 1970. While their roots focused on Japanese Americans, they have expanded their reach to all socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. Their decades-long impact is why I chose them as Assembly District 19's 2023 Nonprofit of the Year.

JCYC offers robust programs, focusing on toddlers to high school seniors, such as child development, leadership training, job readiness and college preparation. Their locations touch every corner of our district from San Francisco's west side to San Mateo County's Daly City.

Its two Chibi Chan preschools, for example, offer a welcoming, nurturing and inclusive learning environment for children aged 2 to 5 years old. Their curriculum is based upon "Project Approach," which takes a topic close to the children's personal experiences and promotes sustained, long-term interest in learning.

As the kids get older, the Educational Talent Search program targets middle school students, giving them access to lunch time and after-school tutors to support their academic success. Field trips and career days are also set up in the hopes of sparking excitement in a possible profession. It's often difficult for youth from under-resourced communities to make connections in a field they're not exposed to. This shows them the possibilities out there.

At the high school level, JCYC offers STEM resources at Galileo and Balboa high schools to nurture interest in science, technology, engineering and math. They prioritize teens who would be the first in their family to attend college. There are also workforce development programs for these older students, giving them opportunities to get a paying job, build relationships and develop skills that will help them succeed in the workplace.

So many graduates of the organization's programs are making a difference today in many sectors across the region. Several have never forgotten who helped put them on the path to success, and they are now ensuring many more generations can benefit from JCYC's offerings. Former participants include Jon Osaki, who is currently JCYC's executive director, and University of California attorney Angus McDonald, who is chair of the non-profit's Board of Directors.

There are numerous similar stories of successful people who have been helped by JCYC. More kids' lives will be impacted for years to come. We are fortunate to have a tireless and committed organization whose work is felt throughout our district.

Congratulations to Japanese Community Youth Council for being named our Nonprofit of the Year and thank you for your dedication to our youth. I cannot wait to honor you in Sacramento on June 7.

Phil Ting represents the 19th Assembly District, which includes the west side of San Francisco along with the communities of Broadmoor, Colma and Daly City as well as part of South San Francisco. Find an archive of his columns at RichmondSunsetNews.com.

Alexandria Theatre Plan

Continued from page 1

plus another $12 million in investment capital.

"It is imperative that we make our proposal attractive to potential lenders. We request that the City enter a project development agreement with my client, which would allow the project to exceed current height and density limits. We request that the affordable unit requirement be set at 12% for this project.

"Lastly, we request that the City remains open to alternatives to landmarking the property, which would essentially foreclose any opportunity for this project to qualify for a CEQA exemption and inevitably delay the commencement of construction."

In her response letter, Chan rejected those particular requests.

"In the proposal, the owner requested to enter into a project development agreement with the City of San Francisco," Chan said. "A project development agreement contains community benefits that address the need for equitable outcomes, including significant affordable housing and local employment components. Your proposal indicates that the agreement would significantly lower or modify the City's existing inclusionary requirements. Then you should know that your current proposal does not meet the needs and expectations for housing that the Richmond community could afford and deserves."

The theater has been closed since 2004. Since then, ownership has passed through different people without any movement toward renovation or restoration, so over the years it has slowly deteriorated to its present state.

After taking ownership, in 2017 Lee submitted and received approval from the SF Planning Commission to build a 13,322-square-foot "swim center" featuring two swimming pools on the first floor, a "learning center" on a second floor and a "business center" on the third floor.

But then the COVID-19 pandemic hit and Lee couldn't find construction loans, especially for swimming pools because of concerns about those types of places possibly spreading the coronavirus.

Chan has previously stated that she tried to get a community revitalization grant, but the property did not qualify. So, she tried to get the City to buy the property to build 100% affordable housing, but they couldn't come to an agreement between the City's assessed value and a price that Lee was willing to sell it to them.

Built in 1924, the theater building will be 100 years old next November.

On April 15, Chan sent a letter to the landowner and his lawyers inquiring about the status of their plans.

A peek through the security gate at the front entrance to the Alexandria Theatre in January shows the mutilated remnants of the blade sign that was removed after it fell into disrepair and was damaged by recent winter storms. *Photo by Thomas K. Pendergast.*

"Seeing the regrettable state of Alexandria Theatre because of the owner's lack of care and progress for development, I'm hereby notifying the owner that I will utilize every legislative tool to push for the preservation of the key historical elements and the future plans for the development of the Alexandria Theatre until I receive the owner's plans for abatements of current violations and future development in writing," Chan said.

She ended her next letter responding to their proposal, however, with a more conciliatory tone, while also requesting more information.

"It is important that we continue our conversations productively and make concrete progress to develop the Alexandria Theatre into a housing project," Chan said in her April 19 response letter. "As such, I ask that you provide my office documentation indicating your project feasibility with financing details. Your document will likely help us propose an agreement that is mutually agreeable and move forward in a timely fashion."

Works by Master Photographer Ansel Adams on Display at de Young

By Noma Faingold

The majestic nature photography of San Francisco native Ansel Adams can be seen on postcards, wall calendars, prints and posters.

One of his most widely viewed shots shows Yosemite when it was virtually untouched by humans, where shadows and moonlight hit the face of Half Dome for maximum drama. By contrast, his 1932 panoramic landscape of the cloud-covered expanse, before the Golden Gate Bridge was built, has a surreal appearance.

His idealistic vision, precision, technical acumen and his perfectionism set a standard for black-and-white scenic art photography.

When Karen Haas, Lane Curator of Photographs at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, was tasked with creating a new Adams exhibition at San Francisco's de Young Museum, she wanted to present the ubiquitous work of Adams (1902-1984) in a present-day context.

"I didn't want to do a straight Ansel Adams show," said Haas, who oversees a collection of 450 Adams photos at MFABoston. "I knew there were pressing issues that concerned him, that concern me, that concern all of us."

The de Young exhibition, "Ansel Adams in Our Time," which opened on April 8 and runs through July 23, places dozens of Adams photos, both iconic and lesser-known images, alongside works of 23 contemporary photographers/artists (such as Mark Ruwedel, Lucas Foglia, Mark C. Klett and Berkeley's Richard Misrach), who focus on many of the same environmental "pressing issues," including drought, forest fires, mining, urban sprawl, global warming, water rights, protected places and indigenous land.

"My goal in doing this show was to offer a new perspective on Ansel Adams by placing his work into broader context and bringing the conversation forward in time," said Haas.

"Ansel Adams in Our Time," organized in five thematic sections – Capturing the View, Marketing the View, San Francisco: Becoming a Modernist, Adams in the American Southwest, and Picturing the National Parks – provide thought-provoking contrasts between photos by Adams and artists influenced by his work.

For example, in the American Southwest section, seeing Adams's 1933 photo, "Americana, Cigar Store Indian," depicts a life-size, wood-carved statue of a stereotypical representation of an indigenous man next to a magazine rack (with visible Time and Life covers) hung near a double self-portrait by San Francisco-born Will Wilson (Diné/Navajo) called, "How the West Is One" (2014). The Wilson piece shows the artist in two profile shots facing each other. It's a witty, in-your-face commentary on the cowboy-and-Indian depiction in westerns, such as the John Ford movie, "How the West Was Won."

"There's quite a juxtaposition with Will Wilson," said Sarah Mackay, assistant curator at the Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts at the Fine Art Museums of San Francisco. "He has dedicated his photographic practice to giving back agency to his Native American subjects."

Adams, a devoted conservationist, is most known for images showing the beauty of nature as unscathed by mankind. While, he wasn't religious, being in a setting like Yosemite was a spiritual experience to Adams. He wanted to capture what he saw, how it made him feel and share it with others.

Photos like, "The Tetons and Snake River" (1942) from Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming, drew hordes of people to national parks. Ironically, Adams may have brought too much attention to these spaces, given the precarious position they are in today.

Visitors admire the pictures in the "Adams in the American Southwest" section of the "Ansel Adams in Our Time" exhibition at the de Young Museum. *Photo by Noma Faingold.*

"These places are still glorious," Haas said. "But we will never experience them alone."

Adams, who grew up in the Sea Cliff neighborhood, was a poor student and dropped out of school. He was an exceptional musician and had plans to become a concert pianist. But once he fell in love with photography during one of his early trips to Yosemite as a teenager, he became obsessed with the camera.

His first museum exhibition was at the de Young in 1932 and he spent much of his life in San Francisco with his wife, Virginia (whom he met in Yosemite) and their two children. He was regarded as a modernist in his use of a large-format camera in the 1930s, which allowed him to capture longer distances and wider spaces. He also experimented with panchromatic film early in his seven-decade career, which provided sharper, more nuanced detail in his images.

In the later decades of his career, the Sierra Club activist shifted his focus to other settings, including several visits to Death Valley, which resulted in such masterful images as the almost abstract, "Sand Dunes, Sunrise, Death Valley National Monument" (1948).

He also became more drawn to grit-

Continued on page 6

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Real Estate

John M. Lee

New Westside Development

The announcement of a proposed 55-story, 712-unit skyscraper at the Sloat Garden Center location by the SF Zoo this past month stirred up quite a bit of debate on whether this is appropriate for the neighborhood and the west side of town. To put that into perspective, it will be approximately 600 feet tall, about the height of the Embarcadero Center Towers near the Ferry Plaza.

The developer's calculations and his interpretation of the law is that this is allowable under the Planning Code and because the City of San Francisco has committed to build 82,000 more units over the next eight years, they should allow this project to move forward.

This triggered much debate among politicians, neighbors and the public in general. The politicians are saying this is crazy and so out of character with the neighborhood that it will never get built. The neighbors are concerned about all of the people moving in and what it does to a quiet neighborhood.

However, a San Francisco Chronicle poll showed that out of approximately 5,000 responses, 60% are in favor of this skyscraper and 40% are against it, contrary to how I am feeling when talking to others about this project.

There have been numerous proposals by the same developer on this site the past few years. The original plan was for eight stories with 213 units, then increased to 12 stories and 283 units and then to 400 units. This latest proposal is substantially larger than his attempts to get approval.

My opinion on this proposal is that the developer is using this for its shock value and starting with something that is so outrageous that he will negotiate down from there and tell everyone how much he compromised. What is surprising to me is the result of the Chronicle poll. We don't know who responded to the poll and so would not put much weight on it other than it is one data point.

Contrast this proposal with the one in Stonestown where the developer has worked with the community on what to build there. They are getting very close on plans to build 2,930 homes, 150,000 square feet of new retail space, six acres of open space and a hotel. The tallest building will reach 190 feet high.

They have spent countless hours in neighborhood meetings, reaching out to community groups and even having open office hours at the Stonestown Galleria talking to whoever that wants information on the development.

I think that when it is done, it will be a project that the neighborhood and everyone who had a hand in it will be proud of. But just to be fair, this is a much larger project than the Sloat Garden Center one.

Talking about new projects, I get a lot of questions about the Westerly, the building next to the Sloat Garden Center. This is a project consisting of 56 condominiums and ground floor retail. It has been on the market for about two years with very slow activity. Currently according to the tax records, there are still 19 units available and no businesses in the retail space. The scale of that project already looked so large compared to the rest of the neighborhood, the proposal at the Sloat Garden Center location will be substantially larger than that!

The other large project in the west end of town will be at Parkmerced. The last proposal was for 8,900 homes, but the rumor is that the developer cannot make the numbers pencil out to start construction, even though there has already been approval on the project. How this plays out is anyone's guess at this point.

San Francisco's goal of building 82,000 new units in the next eight years is a very lofty one considering that since the year 2000, we have built an average of 2,583 units per year. There are many people who think 82,000 is a pie in the sky number. Only time will tell.

John M. Lee is a broker with Compass specializing in the Richmond and Sunset districts. If you have any real estate questions, call him at 415-465-0505 or email at johnlee@isellsf.com. Find an archive of John M. Lee's columns at RichmondSunsetNews.com.

Richmond Homes Sold in April*

Address	Bed	Bath	Sq. Ft.	Price
690 40th Ave.	2	1	975	$1,250,000
747 38th Ave.	3	1	1,190	1,300,000
10 Seal Rock Dr.	2	3	1,480	1,400,000
763 45th Ave.	2	2	1,335	1,700,000
518 22nd Ave.	3	1.5	1,610	1,850,000
6133 California St.	3	2.5	1,780	2,500,000
591 18th Ave.	4	4.5	2,790	2,800,000
166 19th Ave.	4	3.5	3,065	3,460,000
17 25th Ave.	5	4.5	4,805	7,350,000
600 El Camino D. M.	5	6	9,390	12,250,000
9 25th Ave.	5	6.5	7,540	20,000,000

**Partial listing. Source: M.L.S.*

Local Cannabis Dispensaries Targeted in Recent Wave of Robberies

By Thomas K. Pendergast

Cannabis club owners and employees are on edge about the increase in thefts and robberies during the last few months, including one in the Richmond District that was burglarized recently. Some are demanding more support from authorities.

There are at least six clubs on the west side, three in the Richmond and three in the Sunset. Police stations in both districts are experiencing staffing shortages.

Duncan Ley owns the California Street Cannabis Company, which was burglarized in January at about 2 a.m. on a Wednesday morning.

Ley said the burglars pried open the outer security gate. After watching the store security camera footage, he estimates it took them about 10-to-12 minutes to get through the first door. About half a dozen of the suspects got through the second door much quicker, setting off the alarm. It took them about six minutes to loot the shop.

"They were clearly professional," Ley said.

He said it took police about 12 minutes to respond even though the Richmond police station is only a few blocks from his store. Ley recognizes that the department is understaffed.

"If they're out responding to some junkies on Ocean Beach, it's going to take them 12 minutes to get here even at full speed coming down Geary," he said. "Crime is rampant in this City. Criminals operate with impunity. I think the police response time was (inadequate). I'm aware of their under-staffing issues, but by no means am I letting them off the hook."

At a town hall meeting last March, Richmond Station Capt. Chris Canning said police were "suffering from staffing duress." He explained that four years ago that station had more than 90 assigned police officers, not including sergeants, lieutenants and him.

He acknowledged that the staff count has dropped dramatically.

Today, the head count is "in the low 50s," Canning said. "This is a 24-7 operation. I've got about six main shifts to fill."

"The financial loss was not insignificant," Ley said "I'm still waiting for an insurance claim to process, so we're in limbo. I've got to have products on the shelves to serve our customers. And I've got to pay our staff."

He said the criminals are becoming more emboldened because there has been no organized response to stop this.

"These guys just waltz in here and steal our product," Ley lamented. "Nobody seems to be coming to help us. Nobody seems to care."

Sunset District resident Ali Jamalian cares a lot about the cannabis club crime spree.

As chairman of the SF Cannabis Oversight Committee, president of the California State Cannabis Advisory Committee to the Department of Cannabis Control and owner of Sunset Connect, a manufacturer of pre-rolls, topicals, hash products and the like, Jamalian is keenly aware of the problem, especially after his own business was burglarized.

"The burglars did run away because they heard the sirens," Jamalian said. "What was disappointing was that SFPD literally pulled up behind them, like five feet behind them, when they'd just got in the car to leave. And it was like three in the morning; they could have pursued them and they didn't."

Jamalian blames SF Police Commission policy for that, which is when it becomes apparent the benefits of immediate apprehension are clearly outweighed by an unreasonable danger to the officer or others, the officer shall not initiate a pursuit.

He thinks the burglars know this as well.

"I think they're becoming emboldened because their success rate is nearly 100%," Jamalian said. "If you're doing something and you have that kind of success rate, why would you stop doing it? So,

Continued on page 9

Ansel Adams

Continued from page 5

ty, urban subject matter.

"Freeway Interchange, Los Angeles" (1967), which was really just another kind of landscape Adams wanted people to see, as he saw it.

"He always thought the photograph he made that day was the best he could do," Haas said. "Each one was better than the last."

"Ansel Adams in Our Time" will be at the de Young Museum through July 23. A tintype photography workshop with Will Wilson (who has photos in the exhibit) is scheduled on July 15, 10 a.m.- 4 p.m. Participants will be guided through a full demonstration and get to create their own tintype to take home. Learn more at famsf.org.

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Lions Pride: Serving the west side for the past 75 years!

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From the Editor

Michael Durand

The first part of this month's column is directed to our generous readers who sent us a payment to help out with our "Nourish Your Neighborhood Newspaper" (N3) campaign.

I want you to know how inspiring it is to know you have our back and that you support our labor of love. Your generosity and community spirit is sincerely appreciated.

Your donation went to good use. Instead of cutting back to 12-page papers, your donation let us produce 16-page issues with a lot of great content, even though the ad volume went down.

Now that we have initiated our Patreon campaign (more on that in the second half of this column), we are producing some branded items for our new patrons.

I would like to share these products with those who donated to us during the N3 campaign. Please send me an email at Editor@RichmondSunsetNews.com with a delivery address and I'll make sure you get the one-of-a kind merchandise that we'll be sharing with our new patrons. You can also call me at 415-706-6428.

The second part of my message was already published in the April issue, but I am repeating it here because we deliver the Richmond Review to about half of the district one month, the other half the next month.

But first, we have a list on our website of libraries, businesses and more where we leave stacks of our paper each month. If you don't get a copy one month, go to RichmondSunsetNews.com and click the link at the top that says "Richmond Review Locations" to see where you can pick one up.

Now to the repeated part of my column for those readers who might have missed last month's issue.

I am very excited to introduce our new Patreon account.

Patreon is like GoFundMe, but instead of donating one lump sum, patrons contribute a small amount every month to a creative cause.

Patreon is used by artists, photographers, musicians, writers and all types of creators to raise funds to keep the creativity flowing. An artist with generous patrons can work on their craft and fill the world with beauty, instead of working at a less-creative endeavor to help make ends meet.

When we put the word out last year that the ad-only model for local newspapers was barely working to pay the bills, we received many generous supporters who donated to our "Nourish Your Neighborhood Newspaper" campaign. Thank you all! We will be forever grateful for the outpouring of support.

We were especially touched by the notes we received telling us how much our newspaper is loved. So many readers said they look forward to getting the paper each month.

"I read every word of every issue, and have for many years," was just one of many heartfelt notes we received. Support like that truly keeps us going.

There are a lot of stories to tell, and a lot of good writers, photographers and editors who work together to let our readers know about our great neighborhood.

We hope you will consider signing up on our Patreon account to donate $5, $10 or more a month to help us continue this important work.

We thank you most sincerely. You really do inspire the work we do.

Your donation also helps us keep our advertising rates low. It is a struggle for owners to keep their small businesses afloat, and your donation will help us keep our rates reasonable for small businesses and organizations that need to spread the word about their services available to our community.

To find a link to our Patreon account, go to the home page at RichmondSunsetNews.com and click the first link, "Become a Patron to Support Your Neighborhood Newspaper."

I can't thank our supporters enough. We sincerely appreciate you.

Michael Durand is the editor and publisher of the Richmond Review and Sunset Beacon newspapers and the RichmondSunsetNews.com website.

Sign up to be a Richmond Review patron.

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Commentary

Quentin L. Kopp

Reparations, a Moving Target

President Woodrow Wilson, also former president of Princeton University and governor of New Jersey, a Democrat, once observed: "The history of liberty is the history of the limitations on the power of government." And the provenance of government usually expands on federal, state and local levels.

Just reflect on actions of all such forms during the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, San Francisco's residential landlords can finally collect rent from their tenants. That's true also in other cities like Oakland, which has understandably lost both of its major professional sports teams because it wouldn't and probably didn't have money to give them land and other assets to create gaudy new stadiums.

The City of Santa Clara, meanwhile, now understands the costs of lavishing public benefits on the Forty Niners, which has broken criminal laws to secure obedience from five City Council members elected or re-elected with millions of dollars from such private business. (Santa Clara County District Attorney Jeff Rosen has charged one "bought" councilmember with a crime already, and criminal charges against other politicians are possible.)

Meanwhile, California's Reparations Task Force in March outdid San Francisco's versions by considering payment of $360,000 per person to about 1.8 million black Californians who can demonstrate enslavement of an ancestor in the United States. The amount paid by the state taxpayers would total $80 billion. One advocate claims such "reparations" would stop black children from committing crimes.

My friend Ward Connerly founded and is chairman of the American Civil Rights Institute and led the 1996 campaign which successfully stopped quotas in public education, public employment and public contracts by voter enactment of an initiative (California Constitution, Article I, Section 31) prohibiting discrimination or preferential treatment on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity or national origin. (Then-Governor Pete Wilson, Connerly and I co-chaired the winning campaign.)

Connerly declared that even though California is a progressive state, "we're not insane, and so I think that the people of this state would rise up and say 'no.'" Approximately 2.5 million Californians identify as black or African American. Governor Gavin Newsom's proposed 2023-2024 budget is $297 billion, less than half the reparation proposal, and a $22.5 billion budget deficit looms, even with our highest-in-the-land state income tax. The reparations wise-men and women last year proposed $220,000 in divided payments, 60% lower than its 2023 version, which doesn't include a recommended $1 million payment to older blacks for health disparities allegedly shortening their average life span or compensation for property supposedly taken by the government or devaluing black-owned businesses.

One witness, a public policy professor at the University of Connecticut, urged the Task Force "to go beyond ... loss estimates ...."

Harvard Magazine's February issue contained a letter to the editor from a Florida woman who advocates paying such taxpayer money for "economic or social stimulus," not reparations, because the claimants "will be unending," like women denied voter rights until 1919, handicapped persons "denied opportunities," and "long before the Holocaust, Jews were enslaved in Egypt and discriminated against" in the U.S.A. Mark Twain stated: "There is no distinctly native American criminal class except Congress." What about the state legislature and our very own Board of Supervisors?

Finally, attention to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) is in order. Last month these sophists proclaimed the public policy virtue of charging tolls on existing Bay Area highways without mentioning California's supreme status as the highest state gasoline tax entity in our nation. We motorists pay 54.9 cents per gallon for the California Transportation Commission (appointed by the governor) to spend on highways, roads and streets. (We also pay the federal government 18 cents per gallon.) No mention occurred at MTC of lowering the gasoline tax for drivers who paid their money for such highways. More modified appropriation from Californian Mark Twain in the 19th Century: "In the first place, God made idiots. This was for practice. Then he made MTC members." (Twain actually said, "Then he made school boards.")

I must conclude this month with a judicial, if not judicious, story. A Union Pacific shopman, called for jury duty, asked the judge (not me) to excuse him, stating: "We are all very busy at the shop and I ought to be there." "So, you are one of these men who think the Union-Pacific couldn't get along without him." "No, your honor," replied the shopman. "I know it could get along without me, but I don't want it to find out." "Excused," said the judge.

Quentin Kopp is a former San Francisco supervisor, state senator, SF Ethics Commission member, president of the California High Speed Rail Authority governing board and retired Superior Court judge.

If you would like to receive your copy of the Richmond Review in the mail each month, subscriptions are available for $45 per year. You not only get a copy delivered to your door every month, you also get the satisfaction of knowing you are helping keep your neighborhood newspaper and local journalism alive and well.

For subscription information, email Editor@RichmondSunset-News.com, call 415-706-6428 or go to Richmond Sunset News.com.

Kilduff's Korner

by Paul Kilduff

"Yeah, we live in a tiny house, but it's by choice."

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POLICE BLOTTER

Robbery With Gun During Auto Boost: Botanical Garden, Golden Gate Park, March 15, 2:50 p.m.

Victims were sitting on a bench in the Botanical Garden when they heard glass breaking and then noticed fresh broken glass next to their rental vehicle. The victims approached the driver's side of their rental vehicle where they met the suspect who was reaching into the broken window and grabbing their bags.

As the victims approached, the suspect pulled his jacket to the side and exposed a silver handgun in his waistband.

The first victim backed away onto a sidewalk in fear. The second victim approached the suspect and tried to grab their bags back. The suspect then told the victim, "I have a gun," and the second victim backed away in fear.

The suspect got back into a getaway vehicle and drove away.

The case was assigned to SFPD's Robbery Unit which is conducting the follow-up investigation.

Robbery With Gun, Inflicting Physical Pain or Mental Suffering on a Child, Parole Violation: 2400 Block of Lake Street, March 24, 5:50 p.m.

A mother parked her car in her driveway and was taking her 6-year-old child out of the car seat.

The suspect approached her, pointed a firearm in her face and said, "Give me your wallet right now. You want me to do this in front of your kids. I will shoot you."

Fearing for their life and safety, the mother told the suspect she did not have a wallet on her. The suspect then grabbed and stole the mother's back-pack-type diaper bag that contained her iPhone and other valuables.

The suspect got into a waiting get-away car being driven by a second suspect and they fled.

Richmond Station officers helped the mother quickly track her iPhone and provided vital details and live tracking updates to dispatch, which then broadcast those details throughout the City.

Northern and Tenderloin officers spotted the suspect's vehicle and attempted a traffic stop. Both suspects disregarded the officers' orders and jumped out of the get-away vehicle and ran away.

A foot pursuit was initiated and the robber who threatened the mother and child was caught and detained while the unknown driver got away.

Evidence connecting the detained suspect to the crime, along with a firearm, were recovered. The suspect was arrested and his vehicle was towed.

Continued on page 13

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Cannabis Club Robberies

Continued from page 6

that's our common consensus at Sunset Connect. Most of my employees and staff are just shaking their heads and saying 'well these guys have a 100% success rate. They're not going to stop.'"

The danger to employees also seems to be escalating.

In February, a worker at the cannabis club Stiizy, in the SoMa area, was kidnapped at gunpoint and forced to open up that store and locked areas inside.

Jamalian said these are organized gangs and they are getting more sophisticated.

"It's more of an industry inside job," he said. "I don't think anybody is actually putting out the implication that it's one of the former employees of any of these dispensaries. There seems to be a rumor out there that one of the guys from this crew used to work for a large distributor that works California-wide, which would sort of explain why they have access to all of these addresses.

"The fact that when they get into a cannabis premises – even though, in our case, they clearly didn't know the premises – they hadn't been there before, but they knew how to move around and look for the right things. And that's what most of us operators are hung up on; that they know what they're looking for."

Jason Paul, owner of Cannabis Cultures in the Sunset District, agrees "100%" that inside information is being passed around.

Although so far his store has not been hit, he is also suspicious about how these crimes are escalating.

"Someone doesn't just follow someone home and all of a sudden kidnap them and take them to the store to force them to open," Paul said. "There's got to be some kind of point of contact or some relationship there. That's typically what happens. There's someone on the inside who knows something that's getting these people the information, the intelligence to even pull off something like that."

He is also worried that these crimes will stigmatize cannabis clubs more than they already have been.

"Neighborhoods have a misconception. They think that because it's cannabis, it's going to bring a lot of the bad element there," he said. "But this has been going on forever. Businesses get robbed in the Sunset. Shoe businesses get robbed in the Sunset. It's not just the cannabis.

"People are just getting desperate. It's the times."

Jamalian agrees that these burglaries are part of a larger crime trend in general.

"I think that's more of a recent development that sort of goes hand in hand with the general rise in property crimes and violent crimes in San Francisco," he said. "As someone who has been in the cannabis industry in the City since 1999, these are some of the scariest and most disturbing times I've gone through.

"These robberies and these burglaries do not help our argument that we work so hard to substantiate with data that it makes places safer. So this is very counterproductive to that. I don't think anybody would argue that. That's not a good look, I agree."

Ley also rejects the idea that cannabis clubs bring a bad element to a neighborhood.

"When somebody comes out to say that it's going to bring an unsavory clientele, that's just an old racist trope; that's baloney," Ley said. "We're being robbed because we have a product, the same as when a Luis Vuitton store would be robbed. The same as a store with any high-priced merchandise is going to get robbed."

"This isn't just a cannabis issue," Ley said. "It's really not all that different with what's happening with catalytic converters. It's the same organized activity, fencing operations. It's just different groups are doing different crimes. Who is chasing them down?"

"We're the victims of inaction at the city and the state level."

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BALBOA STREET BLOCK PARTY

Support the Heart & Soul SF Balboa Street Block Party happening June 17! We believe in building community and highlighting the incredible small businesses around us. We want to bring your neighborhood to you and this block party is a step toward that goal. Donate $50 and join us in supporting our mission! You can find the GoFundMe in our Instagram link in bio. Your donations will help with paying for the SFMTA block party closure permit, temporary no-parking signage, tables, chairs and the live band. There will be music, food and games at the block party. Everyone is welcome. Be a part of the Heart & Soul SF community. Learn more about us at Heartandsoulsf.com or on our Instagram.

COMMENTARIES AND LETTERS

From the editor: All commentaries we publish are the opinions of the writers and should not be considered our editorial stances on issues. We strive to remain neutral and offer a balance of points of view. We invite readers who wish to express their opinions to send a letter to the editor to Editor@RichmondSunsetNews.com. Word limit for the newspaper is 350, for the website, 500. RichmondSunsetNews.com.

FELTON TECH SQUAD

Felton's Tech Squad is providing free basic tech support for older adults and people with disabilities in the Richmond District. Ask questions regarding how to navigate your smartphone, tablet or laptop. Learn basic skills on your smartphone and tablet. Friday, May 5, 1:30-3 p.m. at the Richmond Library (351 Ninth Ave.) Drop-in for a one-on-one session in English, Cantonese and Mandarin.

FREE EVENTS AT THE SF PUBLIC LIBRARY, RICHMOND BRANCH 351 NINTH AVE., 415-355-5600

CHILDREN/FAMILY PROGRAMS:

"Storytime." Tuesdays & Wednesdays, 11-11:30 a.m.

"Workshop: Paper Dolls with Illustrator Minnie Phan." Ages 5 and older. Register: 415-355-5648. Wednesday, May 10, 1-2 p.m.

"Activity: Mother's Day Craft." Create a tiny flower vase to show your appreciation for your Mother or caregiver. For ages 6–12. Friday, May 12, 3:30-4:30 p.m.

"Workshop: Cultural Mask Making." Ages 8 and older. Register: 415-355-5648. Saturday, May 20, 1-2 p.m.

ALL AGES PROGRAM:

"Annual Richmond Branch Library Open House." Come to the Richmond Branch to meet or reacquaint yourselves with our vibrant Inner Richmond community and for an afternoon of music performances, author/illustrator talk, fire truck visit, raffles, plant swap, food, fun, and more. Saturday, May 6, 1-5 p.m.

TEEN PROGRAM:

"Decoupage Ceramic Tiles." Decorate ceramic tiles with pictures cut from newspapers and magazines. Personalize your decoupage creations with paint, tissue and stickers. For ages 13-18. Supplies limited, no registration needed. Richmond's Teen Area. Tuesday, May 23, 3-5 p.m.

ADULT PROGRAMS:

"Silent Book Club." Bring any book (fiction or nonfiction) for a period of silent reading followed by a discussion when you share what you are reading with others. Club meets every other Wednesday. May 3 and 17, 3-5 p.m.

"Breath meditation." Guided meditation for calming and stress release. Every Thursday, 11 a.m.-noon

"Drop-In Tech Support for Older Adults." Friday, May 5, 1:30-4:30 p.m.

"Commemoration: Acupuncture Legalization in California." Screening of the film, "Acupuncture Fever–the Road to Legalization in California," the first English documentary on the legalization of acupuncture in California. Afterwards, American Association of Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture will provide free consultations to the public. Sunday, May 7, 1:30-4 p.m.

"Performance: Guru Shradha Ensemble Present the Odissi dance." With roots in the East Indian state of Odisha traced back to the second century, Guru Shradha's establishment in the SF Bay Area enables a unique connection of deep history and modernity within a diverse artistic community. Received the Best of Palo Alto 2019 Award for best dance school. Saturday, May 13, 1-3 p.m.

"Workshop: Chinese Tea Eggs." Reservations: 415-355-5600. Tuesday, May 23, 2:30-3:30 p.m.

"Book discussion: Practical Consciousness: Freeing Yourself from Emotional Addiction to Live a More Joyful Life" by Ingvar Villido, presented by practical consciousness teacher Olga Green. This book shares a life-changing secret: disturbing emotions are not permanent residents inside you, there is a way to free yourself from them. Tuesday, May 23, 5:30-7:30p.m.

ADULT FILM PROGRAMS:

"On the Beach at Night Alone." An actress's life goes adrift after the end of an affair. Directed by Korean master Hong Sang-soo. RT rating 92%. NR, 100 min., 2017. Thursday, May 4, 4:30-6:15 p.m.

"Hanzi." A documentary exploring international design, visual culture and identity through the lens of modern Chinese typography. NR, 56 min., 2016. Wednesday, May 17, 6-7 p.m.

"Center Stage/Ruan Ling Yu." Maggie Cheung (In the Mood for Love) embodies tragic screen siren Ruan Lingyu (1910-1935), in what has been described by critics as the most beautiful Hong Kong film ever made! Directed by Stanley Kwan. NR, 154 min., 1991. Thursday, May 18, 4-6:30 p.m.

"Dim Sum: A Little Bit of Heart." A Chinese widow in San Francisco faces the New Year with apprehension after it was foretold she would die. A comedy by Wayne Wang (Chan is Missing). NR, 86 min., 1985. Wednesday, May 24, 5:30-7:15 p.m.

"Picture Bride." A young Japanese woman who agrees to an arranged marriage in turn-of-the-century Hawaii, finds it's not what she expected. With Toshiro Mifune. PG-13, 90 min., 1994. Thursday, May 25, 4:30-6 p.m.

"Kaija Saariaho's opera L'Amour de loin." A full modern opera with Debussy-like music, tells the story of a troubadour who dreams of a "love from afar." Libretto - Amin Maalouf, Conductor - Esa-Pekka Salonen, Director - Peter Sellars. Voted by critics of The Guardian as one of the top 25 classical music works of the 21st century. Special one-time screening. DVD is out-of-print. NR, 139 min., 2004. Saturday, May 27, 2:30-5 p.m.

"Forever, Chinatown." Documentary about octogenarian self-taught artist Frank Wong who has spent decades creating detailed miniature models of the SF Chinatown rooms of his youth. NR, 31 min., 2016. Wednesday, May 31, 6-6:30 p.m.

GOLDEN GATE FROG HOP

Register for the Golden Gate Frog Hop fitness and fundraising challenge for the Richmond Neighborhood Center. Support our community programs by making a donation or joining a team. Win fun prizes and get your body moving. The competition goes until May 31 (and miles are backdated to May 1). Just $25 registration. Free kick off event on April 30! For more information, email events@richmondsf.org.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Happy May birthday to Mike Craig, Max Friedman, Maggie Glaize, Breyana Greats, Tim Keeler, Kathleen Larkin, Autumn Looijen, Michael Lue, Natalie Lue, Paul Mansfield, Jay Parks, Emma Perreira, Lucy Poole, Scott Rittman, Julia Ryder Sill and Lee Yurman. *To add a name to the monthly birthday list, email Editor@RichmondSunsetNews.com. Free.*

Continued on page 11

Commentary

Julie Pitta

The Truth About Crime

The shock waves were felt across the City: A tech executive was stabbed to death in the wee hours of a Tuesday morning. Even in the Richmond District, a quiet corner of town, residents were abuzz with the tragic news. An online news site, bankrolled by a Silicon Valley venture capitalist, asked a question on some minds: "Bob Lee Killing: A Tipping Point in a City Fed Up With Crime?"

In the hours and days after Bob Lee's murder, those in the tech community, conservative political circles – or both – rushed to judgment. Lee's death was inevitable, they said, in a City where crime was rampant under progressive leadership. No matter that a progressive has not held the City's highest office since Art Agnos stepped down more than 30 years ago.

Some laid the blame for Lee's murder on the unhoused, finding in the most vulnerable a convenient scapegoat. Again, the facts don't fit the narrative: Homeless people are more often the victims rather than the perpetrators of crime.

Nine days later, a suspect, a 38-year-old Emeryville man, was arrested. Nima Momeni, like Lee, is a tech executive and the two, according to law enforcement officials, were well acquainted. Those who used Lee's murder as evidence of San Francisco's descent into chaos were suddenly quiet. The truth, it turned out, was far different than they would have you believe.

According to the San Francisco Police Department's (SFPD) own statistics, city residents have rarely been safer. Violent crime, law enforcement's standard measure for public safety, is at a historic low. Certainly, the City has experienced a spike in property crime, no surprise in a city that has one of the highest rates of wealth disparity in the country.

Regardless of the facts, San Franciscans feel unsafe. The blame rests with the very same people who peddled the story of a deranged homeless killer on the loose. They've been ably assisted by the local and national press, who've taken great relish in portraying San Francisco as a crime-ridden dystopia.

Their objective is political. Groups like GrowSF and TogetherSF Action, richly funded by tech venture capitalists, have used scare tactics to alter San Francisco's political landscape. Their first target was progressive District Attorney Chesa Boudin. Boudin proposed a different route toward public safety, one that offered rehabilitation as an alternative to incarceration. San Franciscans will never know whether Boudin's policies would have worked since he was removed more than two years after taking office in a recall campaign that was funded, in large part, by Republican billionaires.

Emboldened by Boudin's recall, they targeted progressive office holders like Supervisor Gordon Mar in District 4, bankrolling his challenger Joel Engardio, a candidate who promised a swift return to "law-and-order." Engardio was among the first to pounce on Lee's murder, appearing on a tabloid TV program to stoke fears about public safety, a tasteless attempt to exploit a man's death for political points.

Mayor London Breed, the primary beneficiary of these scare tactics, now wants them to stop. Crime fears will do little to return San Franciscans to a downtown that's been hard hit by the pandemic. Breed, it must be noted, used fear to consolidate power. She declared a poorly executed state of emergency in the Tenderloin, installed a hardline prosecutor Brooke Jenkins as Boudin's successor, and saw that allies like Engardio and former SFPD public relations chief Matt Dorsey were elected to the Board of Supervisors.

With fears about public safety soaring, Breed has pushed through more funding for police with little evidence that more money will make SFPD more effective. San Francisco has the highest number of officers per capita than any California city. Conversely, it has one of the lowest arrest rates in the country.

There are signs that San Franciscans have had enough. Police Commissioner Kevin Benedicto spoke for many when he said, "It's premature and distasteful to try to fit this horrifying act of violence into a preconceived narrative and use it to advance a political agenda."

The San Francisco Standard, bankrolled by billionaire venture capitalist Michael Moritz, may be correct in one sense: Bob Lee's murder may indeed be a "tipping point." It could be remembered as the moment when San Franciscans rejected a false – and damaging – narrative about the City they love.

Julie Pitta is a member of the executive board of the Berniecrats. She is a former senior editor for Forbes Magazine and staff writer for the Los Angeles Times. You can email her at julie.pitta@gmail.com.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Continued from page 10

INTERNS WELCOME

The Richmond Review and Sunset Beacon newspapers offer unpaid summer internships to students looking for journalism experience and instruction. For more information, call 415-706-6428 or email Editor@RichmondSunsetNews.com.

MEET THE EDITOR OF THE RICHMOND REVIEW – MAY 19

Meet the editor of the Richmond Review: You are invited to meet with Michael Durand, editor and publisher of the Richmond Review and Sunset Beacon newspapers and the RichmondSunsetNews.com website. Bring your story ideas, feedback, suggestions, questions, announcement items and advertising inquiries. We are also welcoming new writers and photographers interested in contributing stories and photos. One Richmond storefront, 802 Clement St. Normally held every second Wednesday of the month, this month's session will be held on Friday, May 19, 1-2:30 p.m. For more information, call 415-706-6428 or email Editor@RichmondSunsetNews.com. Scheduled appointments not necessary but appreciated.

ONE RICHMOND SUMMER COMMUNITY EVENT

Join us for a fun and informative day at One Richmond's Summer Kick Off! Learn how to stay healthy and safe this summer while enjoying interactive activities and resources from community-based organizations. Join a self-defense workshop. Don't miss out on this FREE family-friendly event at The Richmond Recreation Center (251 18th Ave.) on Sunday, June 11, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Find more information at onerichmondsf.com.

PHILANTHROPIST NEEDED

I am a senior lady who needs a place to live at a private residence in the west area of San Francisco. After many months of fruitless searching, I need help from a private philanthropist in order to move beyond this crisis. Having arthiritis, I don't nagivate many flights of stairs or hills. I use public transportation, live quietly, and have excellent references. Call 415-561-9275 if you or someone you know can provide me a home.

'PHOTOS OF THE MONTH' COLUMN ONLINE

Photographers are invited to submit three of their best photos for consideration to be published in the "Photos of the Month" column on RichmondSunsetNews.com. The website averages more than 20,000 views per month. Please submit photos as jpegs, 150 dpi, six inches wide. If you don't know how to size your photos, we can help. While there is no compensation for the submissions, we are planning on awarding a gift to the best photo of the month in the near future. Please submit on the 15th of each month. For more information, email Editor@RichmondSunsetNews.com or call 415-706-6428.

SALVATION ARMY PINEHURST WOMEN'S AUXILIARY DONATION REQUEST

The Salvation Army's Pinehurst Women's Auxiliary is having our annual Spring Festival and Silent Auction Fundraiser on Saturday, June 3, 11 a.m.-3 pm. We are reaching out for your support with a donation of a gift card, product or service for our Silent Auction.
Pinehurst Lodge is a six-month residential treatment facility, located at 2685 30th Ave. in San Francisco's Sunset District. Pinehurst Lodge houses 25 women, providing shelter, food, medical care and clothing without cost to the individual. Counseling, work programs and life skills are also a large part of the program. Pinehurst Lodge has been helping women with recovery since 1975. We welcome all women and have a high rate of success. 100% of the proceeds from our events stay at Pinehurst Lodge and go toward the residents' dental and vision needs, as well as scholarships. We realize most businesses are just now getting back on their feet after the pandemic. However, we hope you will feel it in your heart to consider donating to our very worthy cause. For more information, email nevadasissy@yahoo.com or call 775-220-7733. You can also send mail to Cheryl Gloeckner, 3545 Santiago St., SF, CA 94116.

SELF DEFENSE WORKSHOPS FOR SENIORS - FREE

The Richmond Neighborhood Center and One Richmond is offering seniors free self-defense workshops throughout the month of May. Self defense workshops consist of two 45-minute sessions at the Tat Wong Kung Fu Academy, 601 Clement St. To register, call 415-941-7765 or email onerichmondsf@gmail.com.

SIDEWALK TALK VOLUNTEER LISTENERS

Sidewalk Talk volunteer listeners will be at the Outer Sunset Farmers Market and Mercantile on Sunday, May 7, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. in honor of mental health awareness month. Come out and be listened to by one of our compassionate listeners. Share what is on your mind and we will listen with an open heart and open mind. You can also become a member of the Sidewalk Talk community and volunteer to listen by registering online here: sidewalk-talk.org/become-a-listener. We hope to see you there! If you have questions, feel free to reach out to the San Francisco chapter leader for Sidewalk Talk, Aimee Rozen at aimeerozen@gmail.com. Eventbrite link: eventbrite.com/e/sidewalk-talk-at-the-sunset-mercantile-tickets-615164853637. Free.

SPRING MARKET POP-UP

Find gifts for Mother's Day at the Lakeside Village spring market pop-up on Saturday, May 13, 10 a.m.–3 p.m. Ocean Avenue between Junipero Serra Boulevard and 19th Avenue.

STAMP COLLECTOR AND STAMP COLLECTIONS

Stamp collector is buying stamps and stamp collections. I am buying "older stamps" from the 1800s to 1930. American Philatelic Society member since 1986. Pictures are appreciated. Call or text message 415-533-0761.

THANK YOU

Thank you to Stanley Mui, MD and the talented and compassionate health care team at Kaiser Permanente's Neck and Head Surgery department. Your life-saving skills are not taken for granted. You are appreciated!

Announcements: $1 per word, 20 word minimum. Share birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, births, obituaries, graduations, sports highlights, business accomplishments, retirements, college admissions, etc.

FREE: Add a name to the monthly birthday list or submit free community events at no charge. We support small businesses: Free announcements for small businesses celebrating an anniversary or other significant milestone or event. Send announcement to Editor@RichmondSunsetNews.com.

Announcements will run in the Richmond Review and Sunset Beacon newspapers (36,000 copies) and on RichmondSunsetNews.com (20,000+ views per month). Ads must be pre-paid. Deadline: 20th of the month. Mail check to: P.O. Box 16035, S.F., CA 94116. Call 415-706-6428 or email editor@RichmondSunsetNews.com for more details.

Joe's Ice Cream
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A Richmond District Favorite Since 1959!
TRY OUR DELICIOUS BURGERS, CRISPY FRIES, HOT DOGS, SALADS AND MORE
Voted "Best Ice Cream" in the 2022/23 "Best of the Richmond District" survey by the readers of the Richmond Review newspaper.

OUTER SUNSET FARMERS MARKET & MERCANTILE
Sundays 9-2pm
WIC & EBT ACCEPTED
now offering MARKET MATCH!
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RAIN OR SHINE
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All Sunset Mercantile events are smoke-free pursuant to SF Health Code Article 19L.

OutsideLands.org
Western Neighborhoods Project

Honor, Remember and Support

MEMORIAL DAY

USS San Francisco Ceremony
Sunday, May 28, noon, (11:30 a.m. arrival)
Lands End
ca38foundation@gmail.com (rsvp)

San Francisco National Cemetery (Presidio)
Monday, May 29, 11 a.m. (Band at 10:30 a.m.)
presidio@presidiotrust.gov

Golden Gate National Cemetery
Monday, May 29, noon
1300 Sneath Lane, San Bruno CA
Veterans of Foreign War Community Service Project

‘Then and Now’: Clement Street and 11th Avenue

Left: Take a trip back in time to 103 years ago and this is what the southwest view at the corner of Clement Street and 11th Avenue looked like on May 11, 1920. Masten the Tailor was on the southeast corner, Cascade Market was on the southwest corner. *Photo courtesy of a private collector/Western Neighborhoods Project/OpenSFHistory.* Right: Both buildings still stand, with the one on the left moved to the rear of the lot. The tailor business is now Shabu Club and the storefront where the market was is now the Richmond Clay House ceramics studio. *Photo by Michael Durand.*

Spiral Crossword

By Jess Goldstein

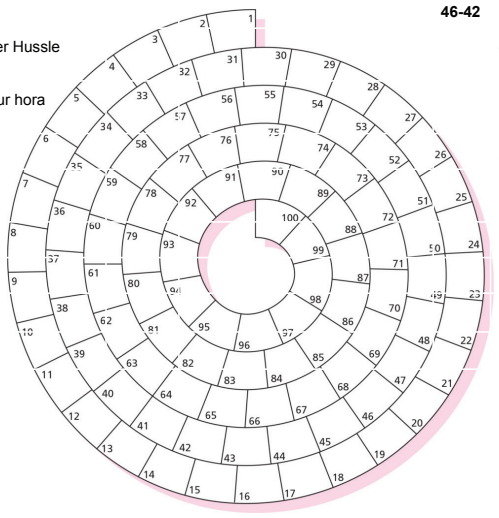
When completed, this grid will contain two sets of answers. One will read inward from space 1 to space 100, and the other will read outward starting at space 100. Each space will be used exactly twice. Work from both sets of clues to complete the puzzle.

Inward

1-6 Designer McCartney
7-16 Reusable accessory
17-20 Online marketplace
21-24 It may be laid or set
25-30 Repeated, as a beat
31-35 Bellyache?
36-44 Sentence part
45-49 ___ salts
50-56 “Almost!”
57-62 Late rapper Hussle
63-66 Twenty-four hora periods
67-76 Problem for reading teachers
77-86 “She Will Be Loved” singer
87-91 Hybrid fruit variety
92-95 Politician’s supporters
96-100 Junker

Outward

100-97 Alaskan gold rush town
96-90 Classic Buick
89-84 Sanaa resident
83-79 “Chicago” or “Scooby-Doo” character
78-72 Pre-pre-school
71-68 Bill site
67-60 “We’re engaged!”
59-53 Clorox brand
52-47 Earth and beyond
46-42 “The Hunger Games” tribute
41-37 It may be hard to drink
36-29 Make impossible
28-20 Summer bash
19-13 Former Justice Potter
12-8 Shade of blue
7-1 Croquet gear



Send letters, comments and suggestions to: Editor@RichmondSunsetNews.com

The Future Is Here: Driverless Cars Are Already on Our Roads

By Linda Badger

For nearly a decade, futuristic-looking Waymo and Cruise “autonomous vehicles” (AVs) have roamed the streets of tech-forward San Francisco, with human “safety” drivers behind the wheel. These AVs were being programmed and tested for the day when they could transport passengers and goods without human drivers and “transform the transportation system.” While our transportation system is yet to be transformed, driverless cars are here.

If you think you’ve seen one of these cars in your neighborhood, with no one at the wheel, your eyes are not deceiving you. Both Waymo and Cruise are sending “unmanned” driverless cars onto San Francisco streets as part of a pilot program overseen by the California Public Utility Commission (CPUC).

The CPUC has imposed numerous restrictions on when, where and how the companies can operate commercial passenger services using AVs in San Francisco. For example, Cruise (funded by General Motors) can offer its driverless passenger service for a fee, but only between the hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m., at a maximum speed of 30 m.p.h., and not in the City’s crowded downtown core. Waymo (owned by Alphabet/Google) can operate at all hours, up to 65 m.p.h., but must have a human “safety” driver present to charge a fee for rides.

Waymo has been able to clock fully driverless hours by offering free rides to its employees and to adventuresome members of the public who signed up for free rides on the “Waymo One” ride hailing app. Since December 2022, Cruise has partnered with USF to offer students free rides in its driverless taxis.

In December 2022, both companies petitioned the CPUC to lift nearly all restrictions on their operations in San Francisco. Both Cruise and Waymo tout impressive safety records, although Waymo has been more transparent. After more than 1 million miles of driverless rides in cities like Phoenix and San Francisco, Waymo reported no injuries; only two collisions significant enough for a car to be towed; and 18 minor “contact events,” none of which involved pedestrians or bicyclists. Fifty-five percent of all events involved human error. The companies point out that their cars are never distracted, drowsy, drunk or speeding while on the road.

Nevertheless, in January, the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, the San Francisco County Transportation Authority and the Mayor’s Office protested the companies’ requests for nearly unlimited permits, calling for a more incremental approach.

While the prospect of all-electric, driverless cars is exciting and taking the

Continued on page 15

VOLUNTEER TODAY!

Make a Difference in the Lives of Many

The San Francisco Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is recruiting volunteers to visit and provide support to seniors and persons with disabilities living in long-term care facilities.

Bilingual in Cantonese a plus but not required.

To Learn More, Call (415) 751-9788

You can also email us or learn more online:
ombudsman@felton.org | felton.org/ombudsman

Ombudsman LONG-TERM CARE SAN FRANCISCO
Felton institute

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POLICE BLOTTER

The suspect was using two different names. One name revealed no record, but his real name revealed he was on active parole for a violent offense. California Department of Corrections confirmed the suspect's identification. The District Attorney's Office is moving forward with the prosecution on these violent crimes.

Outstanding Warrant: 100 Block of Blake Street, March 28, 12:30 p.m.

Officers from the Park Station were on patrol searching for a known suspect with a confirmed warrant.

Officers observed the suspect's vehicle parked in the area. A computer check revealed the vehicle had an expired registration in excess of six months.

While officers were standing by to tow the vehicle for the registration violation, the suspect exited a dwelling to contest the tow.

Having confirmed the warrant suspect's identity via SF Mug Shots earlier in the day, officers arrested the suspect for the outstanding warrant.

Hate Crime, Malicious Mischief, Graffiti: 800 Block of 28th Avenue, March 30, 10:33 a.m.

The principal of Bais Menachem Elementary School was called by one of her teachers regarding a swastika that was drawn on the basketball court with chalk. The school is a Jewish School, and the swastika is a recognized symbol of hate against the Jewish community.

This was the third incident like this at the same location. The case was assigned to SFPD General Works Unit which is conducting the follow up investigation.

Aggravated Assault With Weapon: 100 Block of Blake Street, April 2, 11:52 p.m.

Officers from the Park Station responded to a residence regarding an assault. When they arrived, officers met with the victim who told them that the suspect had thrown a metal tool at her and was acting erratically. Although the victim was not injured, the victim feared for her life and safety and informed officers she wanted to press charges against the suspect.

Officers arrested the suspect for aggravated assault.

Burglary, Hot Prowl, Unlawful Entry: 600 Block of 43rd Avenue, April 5, 3:06 p.m.

Two victims (a 49-year-old mother and her 29-year-old daughter) were in their house sleeping.

The mother heard a loud crash coming from the back bedroom. She walked to the back room and saw the suspect standing in the room. The suspect was wearing a blue hooded sweatshirt and did not say anything to the victim. The mother began yelling and screaming causing her daughter to run upstairs from the garage. The mother and daughter then ran through the house and out through the front door yelling and screaming.

The daughter saw the suspect standing in the hallway that led to the back room. While the mother and daughter were outside talking to 911, they saw the suspect exit the front door of their home and walk calmly down the street. The victims provided the last direction of travel to dispatch.

Officers reviewed video footage and provided a detailed description of the suspect's clothing. The description provided would immediately confirm the same suspect's involvement in the next hot prowl burglary 30 minutes later.

The case was assigned to the SFPD's Burglary Unit which is conducting the follow-up investigation.

Burglary, Hot Prowl, Unlawful Entry, Stolen Property and Resisting Arrest: 600 Block of Balboa Street, April 5, 3:40 p.m.

Officers responded to a call reporting a burglary suspect being detained by a crowd of people.

A husband and wife came home, walked up the stairs to their apartment and saw the suspect standing near their kitchen table. The husband saw the suspect putting his cameras into a grey backpack. When the suspect saw the victims, he ran out a sliding glass door down to the sidewalk and up the street.

Both victims gave chase and quickly caught the suspect, never losing sight of him. The husband and wife pinned down the suspect and an anonymous passerby helped.

The victims recovered stolen property from their apartment that the suspect had dropped during the struggle.

An investigation was begun. Cold shows were conducted involving victims from both incidents and results were all positive for suspect's involvement. The suspect was arrested for both hot prowl burglaries. The suspect complained of pain and shortness of breath, was treated, and cleared from San Francisco General Hospital then booked at County Jail.

The case was assigned to SFPD Burglary Unit which is conducting the follow-up investigation.

The Redwoods, A Community of Seniors (The Redwoods) in Mill Valley, CA Announces HUD Section 8 Waitlist Lottery Opening

The Redwoods is accepting in person or through the mail, HUD Section 8 Waitlist Applications from **Monday through Friday, 9:00am – 4:00pm from May 1, 2023 through May 31, 2023**. As long as the Waitlist Application is submitted within the stated timeframe, the timing of the Waitlist Application submission will have no effect on inclusion in the lottery to be processed on the waitlist.

Deadline: Applications must be submitted in person by May 31, 2023 or postmarked by May 27, 2023.

Applications will be accepted from any qualifying individual(s). This Waitlist is for subsidized, one-bedroom rental units ONLY. Required qualifications are:

- Applicant and co-applicant if any must each be 62 years or older
- Households must be no larger than two (2) people
- Current household income must be at or below the following amounts:

Family Size	2022 Income Limits Very Low Income Limit
1	$65,250
2	$74,600

The Redwoods will impose the following preference for the Waitlist:

- Residents who already reside at The Redwoods but who currently do not hold a Section 8 certificate

To apply, pick up an application at Marin City Community Development Corp (MCCDC) 441 Drake Avenue, Marin City, CA 94965 or download the application from www.marincitycdc.org or www.theredwoods.org. **All Waitlist Applications will be accepted at MCCDC 441 Drake Avenue, Marin City, CA 94965**. A lottery system will be used to select which applicants will be placed on the Waitlist. The maximum waitlist is 150 persons. Winning lottery results will be posted online to The Redwoods website (www.theredwoods.org) no later than one week after the lottery. Please remember that your Waitlist Application does not guarantee a spot on The Redwoods Waitlist.

MCCDC is prepared to assist applicants who may need assistance completing the Wait List Application form. This assistance may take the form of answering questions, helping applicants with literacy, vision or language issues and, in general, making it possible for interested parties to apply for assisted housing. Application accommodations for persons with disabilities will be provided upon request. Application materials are available in Spanish at www.theredwoods.org .

EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

Lafayette Musical

Continued from page 1

ra. She gave me as many notes as I could take."

As the new director, Bleiman's first responsibility was choosing the musical the school would perform.

"When I came across 'Matilda,' it was super witty and funny, and I was immediately into it," Bleiman said.

Auditions for "Matilda" began in early November. Bleiman said he "needed a village" to help bring everything together, as an impressive collection of 123 students participated in the show.

"I was director just by name, you know," Bleiman admits. "We had four other parents who worked as hard as I did and were just as essential as I was, if not more. I couldn't have done it without them."

The production crew divided into teams and led different aspects of the show. Bleiman was in charge of communicating with parents and teaching kids how to perform their songs.

"You could build a nuclear submarine with the same amount of information and spreadsheets I have," Bleiman joked. "There was a ton of moving parts."

After five months of rehearsals, opening night came in late March. The school hosted three public performances in March, and all three shows

Ben Bleiman, director of Lafayette's theater group. *Photo by Clarisse Kim.*

were an "absolute success," according to Bleiman.

"The (auditorium) was packed; it was standing room only," King said, "It was just a testament to how committed the parents and kids are."

King said the revival of the school play has left a profound impact on the students. She was delighted that the program has encouraged kids to participate in the dramatic arts. Throughout production, she said the cast also learned crucial lessons like cooperation and responsibility.

Both Bleiman and King agree: One of the most important lessons the musical teaches the performers is confidence.

"Some kids were so shy," Bleiman recalls, "but when they went on stage and (performed) and got standing ovations … that's going to stay with them for years. When they get onstage, they have power."

King says she appreciates that the spring musical's return has brought the Lafayette community together. She believes bringing the musical back has helped heal the isolation caused by COVID.

"The musical has brought everyone together around one central production that everyone can feel proud of," King said. "We're finally coming back to being a whole school together."

Bleiman says he is very excited about the future.

"On the last night of the musical, we were talking literally right after the performance about how excited we were for next year," he said. "I'm talking tons of texts. We can't wait to start working."

Bleiman wouldn't reveal any details. "It's still a secret, but I know we're going to knock it out of the park again," he said.

Firefighting

Continued from page 1

Richmond District and 19th Avenue in the Sunset District. The hydrants for these are identified by red tops in the Richmond and black tops in the Sunset.

Former city supervisors Sandra Lee Fewer and Gordon Mar both pushed for the expansion of this system into western neighborhoods. Current District 4 Supervisor Joel Engardio also supports expansion of the EFWS.

"We must plan and act before it's too late," Engardio said. "When disaster strikes, the Sunset's lack of EFWS infrastructure will only harm citywide disaster response and recovery efforts. While this report is an important first step, I am committed to working with my colleagues on the Board of Supervisors to ensure we prioritize financing and construction of this critically important infrastructure. We must remain focused on this long-term goal to help save countless lives, businesses and homes."

The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission looked at future performance requirements for the EFWS based on population and development projections to the year 2050. That reports concludes that it would cost a total of nearly $2 billion in current dollars, nearly $3 billion if completed by 2034 and $4 billion if completed by 2046.

In March 2020, SF voters approved a $628.5 million bond measure to fund upgrades and improvements to the City's firefighting infrastructure, part of which is for expanding the EFWS system into westside neighborhoods. But, according to the recent study, this will not be enough.

"The large EFWS extension and citywide capacity upgrades identified in the EFWS 2050 Planning Study require much greater investment than projected funding levels and borrowing capacity allow," the report concludes. "While General Obligation (G.O.) and water revenue bonds comprise the bulk of the funding to date, the EFWS competes with other urgent capital needs throughout the City for future allocations of these funds. The City should continue to make incremental allocations … to the EFWS, as funding and other priorities allow. Concomitantly, developer agreements, and Mello-Roos financing through a Community Facilities District can provide a supplementary source of funding for the system.

"The G.O. bonds are the most cost-effective financing

Black-topped EFWS hydrants reach west as far as 19th Avenue in the Sunset District (above) and red-topped EFWS hydrants go west as far as 12th Avenue in the Richmond District. The west sides of both districts are only equipped with the regular white hydrants without the resilience and high-pressure capabilities of the EFWS. *Photo by Thomas K. Pendergast.*

mechanism. However, limitations on debt capacity necessitate the exploration of other funding options," the study concludes.

These other options are Fire Protection Fees through an Impact Fee; Mello-Roos Bonds through a Community Facilities District; a temporary water utility user surcharge; Tax Increment Financing Districts and federal grant funding.

That last source from the Feds comes with a caveat.

"Grant funds could be sought to retrofit existing utility systems, but not for the expansion of fire suppression systems like EFWS," according to the study. "Grant funds could be sought to reduce the risk of ignition through gas-shut-off values or building materials. In addition, a project must be considered cost effective in order to be eligible."

Retired SF Fire Department (SFFD) Assistant Deputy Chief Tom Doudiet was one of the first to raise the alarm about the lack of action to expand the EFWS pipelines westward.

In an emailed response for comment, he said the proposal to expand the system to the western and southern neighborhoods goes back to the 1960s as part of the SFFD's master plan. Since then, a Civil Grand Jury (CGJ) reported on the subject in 2003 and more recently another CGJ called for its expansion in 2019.

"That the City seems to finally have begun to consider how the expansion into the 15 unprotected residential neighborhoods might plausibly be funded, 60 years after the initial proposals by the SFFD, speaks volumes about our collective ignorance/amnesia/indifference/complacency about the history and geologic realities of living in the Bay Area; the fundamental lack of understanding that when the long-anticipated 7.9 earthquake finally strikes on one of our four major earthquake faults, 80% of the property damage and loss of life San Francisco will not be the result not of shaking, but of fires," Doudiet said.

"The cost estimates, of course, accelerate the longer the completion of the high-pressure hydrant expansion project is pushed out. The 2034 date was suggested by the 2019 CGJ report because 15 years seemed like a generous amount of time for the project to be completed, especially considering that between 1908 and 1913 city engineers were able to design, install and put into service the 10.5-million-gallon Twin Peaks Reservoir, two saltwater pump stations, five saltwater fireboat manifolds and 887 high-pressure hydrants, while armed with only slide rules, paper and pencils, and basic engineering competence – in other words, none of the hi-tech tools today's engineers have at their disposal."

In the meantime, hose tender fire trucks, which cost about $1 million each, could extend the system out into neighborhoods that aren't covered now.

"Each hose tender can lay out about 4,000 feet of hose, so nearly close to a mile," SFFD Deputy Assistant Fire Chief Tom O'Connor said in 2021. "We can relay water and create an above-ground water main if the other water mains break. It's not a perfect solution, but it's the best solution we have until the (EFWS) system does get built out. Right now, in the pipeline we have money for three new ones to add to it, because the Grand Jury report called for an additional 20."

The SFFD has four of the trucks in service now, but these older models are limited by the fact that they have no water pumps, so they still require a regular fire truck engine to pump water out of cisterns or lakes. In the event of a major conflagration after an earthquake, this could lead to a shortage of available fire trucks.

Frank Blackburn retired from the SFFD in 1991 as an assistant chief after a 32-year career with the department. He was also the director for earth-

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Driverless Cars

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"human" factor out of driving has some appeal, the City's concerns are understandable. There have been incidents where AVs have unexpectedly stopped, blocking traffic until human "rescue drivers" sent by the company arrived to drive them away. Not to mention the YouTube video of an SFPD officer stopping a Cruise AV on Clement Street because its headlights were off, only to find there was no driver – and then to watch the car inexplicably zip away to the next block. Some of these potential hazards, such as incidents of unplanned or unexpected stops, do not have to be reported by the companies, so the City is asking for more data and transparency.

Between May 2022 and Dec. 31, 2022, the City learned of 92 separate incidents of unplanned and unexpected stops, mostly involving Cruise AVs. City officials assert that this number is too high, and that the effect on public transit, traffic and safety will only grow once AVs are allowed to operate without limitation on city streets. The City is particularly concerned that stalled AVs will result in more Muni delays.

The City's protest also describes a handful of incidents involving the City's emergency services. On several occasions, AVs reportedly interfered with active fire scenes, running over a fire hose, for example. Emergency services were also unnecessarily deployed in several incidents in which AVs summoned 911 due to "unresponsive passengers," who had simply fallen asleep during their robo-rides.

Moreover, the City pointed out that there is no government oversight as to how many AVs Cruise and Waymo decide to deploy in San Francisco, which some believe already has too many cars crowding its narrow streets. Unaddressed is the impact AVs could have on the many Bay Area residents who make a living by offering ride share, delivery and taxi services.

To date, it is uncertain the affect AV passenger services will have on the transportation system. Before a decision is made to go beyond the present pilot program, the City wants more data, more study and more oversight. On the other hand, the companies want to move forward, promising safer streets and fleets of electric vehicles that are better for the environment.

Whether thrilled or terrified by the prospect of driverless car services operating freely in San Francisco, buckle your seatbelts: The CPUC is set to decide this contentious issue by mid-May 2023.

(Editor's note: As this issue of the Richmond Review was at its press deadline, the SF Chronicle published a story, "Cruise gets green light for 24-hour robotaxis in S.F." in its April 27 issue.)

The scene above will likely be a familiar sight thoughout San Francisco for many years to come: A car driving by without a person in the driver's seat. ***Photo by Linda Badger.***

Firefighting

Continued from page 14

quake preparedness.

"The use of existing G.O. Bond money and Revenue Bond money is good, and if a bond issue is not possible for immediate additional use, then use of funding from a charge for Fire Protection, such as on a sewer surcharge of water bills, with the charge based upon the usage of each water meter. That way each would pay their fair share based on current use, commercial and high rises more than single-family homes to keep things fair," Blackburn wrote in an emailed response. "In 1986, I was on a committee with the SFWD and the City Controller's office in researching such additional funding methods."

The current plan would pump water out of Lake Merced as a backup source and send it north. However, questions remain if there would be enough pressure available from that source to do any good in the outer or middle Richmond District.

That's why some, like Blackburn, are calling for the installation of a saltwater pump near the northern end of Ocean Beach.

"What is missing from this project is the recommended underground high-pressure saltwater pump station at the foot of Fulton Street," he said. "This pump station is needed for supply from the Pacific Ocean, with unlimited volume available, and recommended by the Civil Grand Jury report of this matter and consultants to the SFPUC."

Dick Morten was on an advisory committee for seismic safety to Mayor Gavin Newsom in 2010 and he said the cost would have been cheaper if the City had acted after the first CGJ report in 2003.

"It has gone up because of dereliction on the part of the City not to do something," Morten said. "They are basically sleepwalking toward conflagration."

Find a link to our ongoing comprehensive coverage of local firefighting challenges on the home page of RichmondSunsetNews.com.

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